



Senator Feinstein Urges Aggressive Action to Clean up Perchlorate  
Following Report of Widespread Milk Contamination  
June 23, 2004

**Washington, DC** – In the wake of growing concerns about perchlorate contamination in drinking water, milk and other agricultural products, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today urged Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and the Bush Administration to move “aggressively” to clean up the contamination in the water and food supply.

**“I am writing to urge you to lead a coordinated statewide effort in California to begin the remediation of perchlorate in water and the environment,”** Senator Feinstein said in a letter to the Governor. **“I have expressed my deep concerns about perchlorate percolating into the food chain in one of our discussions. Now, there is irrefutable proof that perchlorate has, in fact, penetrated the food chain. The State needs to move aggressively.”**

In addition to the letter to Governor Schwarzenegger, Senator Feinstein also sent letters to:

- Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld,
- Environmental Protection Agency Secretary Michael Leavitt,
- Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman
- Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson.

She urged the Administration officials **“to work with other federal agencies and affected states to assess the penetration of perchlorate in our food supply and to work to remediate perchlorate contamination.”**

**“I am deeply concerned about the impact of perchlorate on all Californians, but especially on pregnant women, the unborn, infants, and young children. Scientists have linked perchlorate exposure to deficiencies in thyroid metabolism in the unborn, newborns and infants. This can result in lowered IQ, mental retardation, loss of hearing and speech, and motor skill deficits,”** Senator Feinstein said.

Senator Feinstein also wrote Dr. Bruce Alberts, President of the National Academy of Sciences, to urge that a study on the public health impacts of perchlorate not be delayed further and stressed the importance of the NAS examining the impact of perchlorate on the most vulnerable and sensitive populations, especially children.

Senator Feinstein noted that a study released Tuesday by the Environmental Working Group (EWG) revealed the penetration of perchlorate into the food chain in 32 out of 32 milk samples.

The EWG study examined milk samples gathered by the California Department of Food and Agriculture and found the following:

- The average perchlorate concentration was at 5.85 parts per billion, almost six times as high as the Environmental Protection Agency's provisional daily safe dose.
- The Environmental Working Group also took its own samples of milk sold in supermarkets in Southern California. Out of the 32 samples, 31 were contaminated with perchlorate. The average concentration of perchlorate was at 1.3 parts per billion.
- By drinking milk contaminated with the levels of perchlorate found in the two studies, "half of all children age 1 to 5 would exceed EPA's provisional safe dose just by drinking milk, and more than a third would get twice that dose." And that is by drinking milk alone—not by drinking water or eating other fruits and vegetables that also contain perchlorate.

Regarding the Department of Defense, Senator Feinstein wrote Secretary Rumsfeld: **"I am calling upon the Department to clean up perchlorate at the source of the problem: at the Department of Defense sites and at water sources contaminated by Department of Defense activities and their contractors. In order to fully remediate perchlorate and remove it from our food supply we will need to make sure it is no longer in our soil or riverbeds. In other words, the Department must act swiftly and expeditiously to clean up perchlorate contamination of our water and our environment."**

In her letter to Secretary Veneman, the Senator said: **"I urge the Department of Agriculture to take swift and aggressive action, coordinating with the Food and Drug Administration, to facilitate the sampling, testing and monitoring of foods for perchlorate. It is time for the Federal government to assess the degree to which foods contain perchlorate and to clean up perchlorate wherever it is found in order to protect our children from exposure to this harmful chemical."**

She also noted in her letter to Administrator Leavitt: **"The Administration has stated that actions towards remediation and elimination of perchlorate in the environment cannot be undertaken until the EPA establishes a reference dose for perchlorate. In the absence of federal leadership, States are beginning to act on their own to establish drinking water standards. However, these standards do not take into consideration all potential sources of exposure, nor do they consider the impact of perchlorate on vulnerable populations. California, for instance, has established a public health goal of 6 parts per billion, Massachusetts and Maryland have established advisory levels of 1 part per billion, and Texas has an action level of 4 parts per billion."**

**I know the EPA is waiting for the results of the National Academy of Sciences' study before issuing a final reference dose. I urge the EPA to be prepared to immediately issue an updated reference dose upon delivery of the NAS study. I am also urging the NAS to complete the study by its deadline of August 2004.**

And in her letter to Secretary Thompson, **"I urge the Department of Health and Human Service to take swift and aggressive action, coordinating with the United States Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency, to sample, test and monitor foods for perchlorate. It is time for the Federal government to assess the degree to which foods contain perchlorate and to clean up perchlorate contamination to protect our children from exposure to this harmful chemical."**

On Tuesday, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved Senator Feinstein's proposal to provide \$4 million to clean up perchlorate in the Inland Empire. The funding was included in the FY 2005 Defense Appropriations Bill which has now been referred to the full Senate. Specifically, it would provide \$4 million for the Environmental Security Technical Certification Program to conduct research and a demonstration of clean-up technologies in the Rialto-Colton Basin, where a seven-mile plume was discovered in 2002. This plume has contaminated 22 drinking water wells in western San Bernardino County, jeopardizing water supplies for 500,000 local residents.

In addition to the funding, the Appropriations Committee adopted a provision proposed by Senator Feinstein that the Department of Defense "should expedite the development of a plan to remediate perchlorate contamination. Once that plan is developed, the Committee believes that the Department should take appropriate action to implement this plan."

And the Committee reiterated that the DOD should provide a report to Congress on Perchlorate contamination as required in the FY 2004 Military Construction Conference Report, which was due April 30. To date, the DOD has not provided the report.

Last week, the U.S. Senate approved an amendment to the Department of Defense (DOD) Authorization bill, sponsored by Senator Feinstein, calling on the Pentagon to remediate perchlorate contamination on DOD sites where the chemical threatens the health and safety of Americans.

Perchlorate, which is used in munitions and jet fuels, has contaminated drinking water supplies or the environment in 34 states. If ingested, perchlorate can interfere with thyroid function, and scientific evidence suggests that this effect can impair the normal development of the brain in fetuses newborns and infants, permanently damaging cognitive abilities and brain function in affected children.